

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 2872

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: JORDANIANS' REACTION TO ISRAELI ELECTIONS RESULTS

1. SUMMARY: IN INITIAL MEDIA REACTION AND COMMENTS OF EMBASSY CONTACTS, LIKUD ELECTORAL VICTORY PORTRAYED AS DAMAGING TO PEACE PROSPECTS AND MAY BE INCREASING PROSPECTS FOR ANOTHER ARAB-ISRAELI WAR. SITUATION SAID TO HAVE FAVORABLE ASPECT, HOWEVER, OF FOCUSING ON ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE FOR BENEFIT OF ISRAEL'S FRIENDS WHOSE VISION UNTIL NOW BLURRED. MAJOR CONSEQUENCE OF LIKUD'S VICTORY SAID TO FALL ON U.S. SHOULDERS, NOT ARABS'. END SUMMARY.

2. PUBLIC REACTION THUS FAR OF GOJ LEADERSHIP IS CAUTIOUS PESSIMISM AS REFLECTED IN STATEMENTS OF KING HUSSEIN AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION ADNAN ABU ODEH. IN REMARKS PUBLISHED MAY 20 AND ATTRIBUTED TO UP INTERVIEW, KING
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HUSSEIN QUOTED AS SAYING IT IS "PREMATURE" TO SAY IF LIKUD VICTORY HINDERS OR FOSTERS PEACE MOMENTUM. HE WENT ON TO OBSERVE, THOUGH, THAT THOSE WHO UNTIL NOW FELT MOST ISRAELIS WANT PEACE HAVE HAD THEIR EYES OPENDED TO TRUTH, AND THAT BEGIN'S CALL FOR PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH ARABS IS MEANINGLESS IN VIEW OF HIS COMMENTS ABOUT WEST BANK AS ISRAELI LIBERATED LAND.

MININFO ABU ODEH IN REMARKS MAY 18 SIMILARLY RESTRAINED
TENDENCY TO TREAT LIKUD VICTORY IN DOOMSDAY TERMS,
STATING GOJ INTENDS TO CONTINUE EFFORTS FOR PEACE ON
TERMS THAT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AGREES ARE JUST.
HE WENT ON TO URGE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY--ESPECIALLY
U.S.--TO RISE TO OCCASION BY EXERTING GREATER PRESSURES
ON GOI TO REACH A JUST PEACE SETTLEMENT.

3. GENERALLY IGNORING OR DOWNPLAYING ISRAELI
INTERNAL POLITICAL ISSUES THAT WERE INVOLVED, IN ISRAELI ELECTIONS
OPINION EXPRESSED BY EDITORIALS AND EMBASSY CONTACTS IS MORE
GLOOMY ABOUT FUTURE. THEY SEE LIKUD VICTORY AS
THREATENING PEACE PROCESS AT BEST WITH DELAYS THAT
UNDERCUT ARAB MODERATES AND AT WORST BY ISRAEL'S INTENTION TO
EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM RECENT DIPLOMATIC LOSSES BY MILITARY MEANS.
THUS, ARABS ARE SAID TO NEED TO SHIFT QUICKLY FROM
DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY TO ONE OF IMPROVING MILITARY UNITY AND
READINESS.

4. CONCURRENT WITH THIS GLOOMY VIEW IS A
MORE POSITIVE INTERPRETATION THAT HAS ARAB SIDE REAPING
POTENTIAL BIG DIPLOMATIC GAINS FROM ISRAELI ELECTION
RESULTS. THIS INTERPRETATION IS EXPRESSED EDITORIALY
AND BY A WIDE SPECTRUM OF EMBASSY CONTACTS. LIKUD VICTORY,
FOR EXAMPLE, SAID TO HOLD PROMISE FOR LARGER GAP BETWEEN
GOI AND EUROPEAN SOCIALIST GOVERNMENTS AND PARTIES, NOT
ONLY BECAUSE OF BEGIN'S RIGIDITIES ON ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE,
BUT BECAUSE OF LIKUD'S 19TH CENTURY CAPITALISM TENDENCIES.
MORE IMPORTANT, THOUGH, IS NOTION THAT BEGIN'S EXTREME
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POSITIONS ON MAJOR ISSUES OF PEACE SETTLEMENT--ESPECIALLY
ON WEST BANK WITHDRAWAL--WILL EXPOSE ISRAELIS' TRUE COLORS
ON QUESTION OF WAR OR PEACE WITH ARABS. GENERAL VIEW
HERE IS THAT EXPRESSED BY JORDAN TIMES EDITORIAL THAT
LIKUD VICTORY WAS NOT A FLUKE BUT REPRESENTS "SWING TO
THE RIGHT" AMONG ISRAELIS OF ALL WALKS OF LIFE WHO,
IN FINAL ANALYSIS, PREFER TERRITORY OVER PEACE. HOPE
AMONG JORDANIANS IS HOWEVER WIDESPREAD THAT ISRAEL'S FRIENDS,
ESPECIALLY IN U.S., WILL BECOME DISILLUSIONED, IDENTIFY
ISRAEL AS IMPEDIMENT TO A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, AND
PUT PRESSURE ON GOI TO MAKE NECESSARY COMPROMISES FOR
PEACE.
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